

Participation of adults in learning programmes

A case study done in two adult learning centres in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to investigate what influences adults' participation in learning programmes in Uganda. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What kind of learning activities are adult learners engaged in? (2) Why do adults engage themselves in learning activities? (3) What kind of barriers do adult learners face as they pursue their education? (4) What coping strategies are used by adults to persist in learning programmes?

This study was done in two adult learning centres in Uganda. A case study using qualitative techniques was conducted. Each of the five adult learners who were purposively identified was treated as a case.

Basing on my previous experience with adult learners and with particular attention to theoretical perspectives and previous studies, I used interviews to get views from learners, educators, as well as community members on how adults' participation was appreciated in their communities.

Some of the findings of this study show that learners participated in activities that equipped them with skills to perform in their societies, community members had negative attitudes towards adults' participation, and learners had heavy workload which affected their participation. However, through educator support in form of counselling, there was continued participation in the programmes.

The study concludes with some recommendations to respond to the findings which include; Provision of more professional educators, rescheduling teaching sessions and carrying out community sensitisation to reduce peoples' negative attitudes towards adults' participation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to all those adult learners with special learning needs in Kyambogo University. May God help them achieve their objectives.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As more and more adults join learning programmes, educators and researchers should have a firm understanding of these “special” learners. According to Lieb (1991) adults have special needs and requirements as learners which could affect their participation in learning programmes when not met.

Although the reasons adult learners leave and the strategies for keeping them may differ, the goal of retention is the same: to keep learners in programmes until they achieve their goals. In any programme, adults are largely voluntary participants, but the student role is just one of many roles and responsibilities competing for their time and attention. In fact, personal reasons such as family problems, lack of child care, and job demands are often cited as the cause of withdrawal. At the same time, adults usually have pragmatic, focused reasons for participating and will leave whenever they feel their goals have been met or if they feel the programme will not satisfy their goals. Personal/job factors may seem to be beyond institutional control, whereas programme satisfaction is something educators can improve.

1.1 Background

Present situation of education in Uganda

Education in Uganda follows a 7+4+2 system before one goes to the University. This means seven years in a Primary school, four years in ordinary secondary level and two years in advanced secondary level. The system follows a set of examinations which are administered by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and it expects learners to be at schools from Monday to Friday, from 8.00am to 5.00 pm thus making it difficult for adults who have roles and responsibilities to perform in their homes and communities. The area of adult

education in Uganda continues to be neglected and misunderstood and as a result continues to face serious problems which impact on adults' participation.

Present situation of adult education in Uganda

Both government and (NGOs) Non Governmental Organisations remain the main providers of this type of education. The learners are adults of all social walks of life who include, house wives who want to learn activities related to work in their homes, the rich who want to improve their writing, reading and language skills for communication, the poor, the younger adults and the middle aged adults.

However, the majority of adult learners are women as observed by Okech, Carr-Hill, Katahoire, Kakooza, & Ndidde, (1999). In general, men do not want to join adult education programmes because of the perception that adults learn childish things and women related learning activities. Most adult education classes in Uganda are held in the evenings and some, in mornings depending on the working habits of the community where the learning programme is located.

Curriculum content

The learning programmes for adults in Uganda use local languages spoken by people where the learning centre is located as a language of instruction. As observed by Nuwagaba (2005): most of what is taught to adult learners is from a curriculum developed by Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (GL&SD) which integrates skills of writing and reading with social, economical and political activities relevant to the learners in order to make them functional.

Chapter 2 includes a short orientation about the development of adult education in Uganda.

1.2 Research problem

This study is focused on what influences adult learners' participation in learning programmes in Uganda. Specifically, the study seeks to find out what kind of learning activities adults are participating in, what motivates them to participate, the barriers they go through and what could be the coping strategies used to persist in participation. In this study barriers refer to obstacles that adult learners go through as they participate in learning programmes. The barriers may be connected to the organisation of the learning centre, lack of time, community members' attitudes towards education of grown up people, methods of teaching and the physical environment of the learning centres.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- (1) What kind of learning activities are adult learners engaged in?
- (2) Why do adults engage themselves in learning activities?
- (3) What kind of barriers do adult learners face as they pursue their education?
- (4) What coping strategies are used to increase adult learners' participation?

1.3 Justification

I felt it necessary to reflect on my professional experience of eight years facilitating the learning of adults. I have interacted with many different adults as they learn and realised that in many cases, adults undergo several problems while pursuing their education which need to be investigated.

Uganda is implementing education for all. Universal Primary Education was launched in Uganda in 1997 and so far it has taken the attention of many people to find out problems associated to it, and there is little on the education of adults being done.

Similar studies have been done else where, for example; Campbell (2000): “The implementation and evaluation of a retirement education”, Campbell (1998): “Redefining student success: learning from non traditional learners” and Clarke (2000): “Registered nurses as adult learners”, and there seems to be no similar studies done in Uganda.

It is therefore anticipated that the discoveries of this study will assist, government, agencies and organisations which offer educational programmes for adults to better understand what factors are important when selecting an educational programme and to improve on the strategies of increasing adults’ persistence in learning programmes.

1.4 Scope of the study

The study focused on activities adults were learning, what was motivating them to participate, the barriers they were facing and the coping strategies used for persistent participation in learning programmes. The study was conducted in two learning centres in Uganda; one in an urban setting and the other one in a rural setting. Both adults that were attending classes at the above centres and those who had dropped out were part of the study. It also covered the physical conditions of the learning centres. The study did not address the issues of those adults who had not joined the learning programmes.

1.5 Definition of concepts

Adult learners

An adult person is defined differently in different countries. For example, he / she can be defined according to age, economic status, cultural and social roles he/she plays in his her community. Legally in Uganda, an adult is any person who is 18 years or above (Uganda Government, 1995). Therefore, an adult learner is defined

as any adult person undertaking any form of organised learning activity and is 18 years or above.

Adult education

Adult education is a type of education given to persons defined as adults by their communities with an intention of improving on their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Merriam & Brockett (1996) define adult education as participation in systematic learning activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults.

Adult educator

A person who facilitates a formal learning of adults by creating an environment that makes them feel secure.

Barriers to learning

Barriers are defined as obstacles that adult learners go through as they pursue their education.

Adult learning centre

They are places identified by the adults themselves with the guidance of their educators where learning takes place. They can be school buildings for pupils, social centres, churches, mosques, government buildings like sub –county and parish headquarters or they can also be places under trees.

Coping strategies

The specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological that were being used to tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events that affect learners' participation in learning programmes. Holahan & Moos, (1987) say that coping strategies are

responses designed to change behaviour. They state that coping strategies are particularly designed to lead people into doing some activities.

1.6 The geographical area of study (Uganda)

Uganda is located in East Africa and borders Kenya in the east, Tanzania and Rwanda in the south, Democratic Republic of Congo in the west and the Sudan in the north. These boundaries were set by Britain. Uganda achieved her independence from Britain in 1962. The political boundaries brought in different people with different cultures and different political systems and this has become difficult to come up with a political working system after independence. Uganda has over 30 languages and the official one is English (Uganda Government, 1995). The population of Uganda is approximately 27 million people (Uganda Government, 2002).

The current challenges Uganda is facing include; draining of wetlands for agricultural use; deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion and poaching in the National Parks. These challenges are an environmental issue which can be addressed by educating the adult population. Agriculture is the main economic activity and it employs about 90% of the population (Nuwagaba, 2005).

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction. Chapter 2 presents theories and literature addressing issues pertaining participation of adult learners in learning programmes on learning activities, motivation, barriers they go through and strategies for increasing their participation in learning. Chapter 3 presents the methods used in conducting this study. Chapter four presents the presentation of data and its analysis. Chapter five presents the discussion of the findings, conclusion and recommendations.

2. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

This chapter gives some information about the development of adult education in Uganda. However, the main focus is on the theories and literature relevant to the present research problem. It presents some of the essential related knowledge that practitioners in the field should be aware of, and this concerns the type of learning activities, what motivates adults to participate in learning, the barriers they meet and the coping strategies to improve on their participation in learning programmes.

2.1 Development of adult education in Uganda

Before the introduction of Western civilisation in Uganda, education was purely indigenous where adults carefully guided the development of young children into the culture. With the advent of both Christianity and Islam in Uganda in the 1880s, the emphasis was put on teaching adults with the purpose of making them able to read the holy books i.e. the Bible and the Koran. According to Cula (2003), the protestant missionaries in Uganda made literacy a normal test for baptism. Adult education centres were therefore started at churches and mosques, curriculum started changing and regulations started coming in thus marking the beginning of formal adult education in Uganda. Not much was done to educate adults by the colonial government apart from sensitizing people to be loyal to it and to grow cash crops until the end of Second World War (Cula, 2003).

According to Okech et al. (1999), it was after this war that the colonial government started adult education programmes mainly to occupy the returning indigenous soldiers. Uganda became independent in 1962 and by 1972; a number of adult education institutions, programmes, personnel and adult learners had increased tremendously (Cula, 2003).

Surprisingly, the semi illiterate Idi Amin who had overthrown the first post colonial government in 1971 in a military coup, launched a massive literacy campaign whereby all adults were expected to attend adult education classes and all secondary school and university students and all primary school teachers were ordered to teach these adults. However, by 1977, stiff opposition to Idi Amin's regime had grown and he decided to concentrate on suppressing his political enemies leaving adult education programmes unattended. Cula (2003), points out that Amin's regime caused fear in all ways and that by 1980; most adult education programmes had stopped. Due to the civil strife that followed even after Amin had been overthrown, the state of adult education in Uganda remained very weak until the early 1990s when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government put adult education among its priority areas.

Efforts at improving educational levels of the population produced policies based on the Educational Policy Review Commission of 1989 and the subsequent white paper on education of 1992 (Okech, 2004). As a result a pilot project on functional adult literacy was launched in eight districts and in 1996 the programme was expanded to include other districts and renamed Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme.

Learning activities in which adults participate

In Uganda like in most African countries, adult education programmes are aimed at providing reading, writing and numeracy skills for economic, social and political development. The curriculum content of these programmes integrates the learning of literacy skills with agricultural and social skills relevant to the people. The curriculum content is developed according to programme areas and themes. Examples of programme areas for adult learners in Uganda are agriculture, health and gender issues.

Nuwagaba (2005) says that some English lessons are also taught to adult learners and that the content is picked from books designed for primary schools.

Adult education programmes are supposed to offer learning activities of relevance to the learner's every day life. In Uganda, reading, writing and numeracy are integrated in economic and social skills relevant to the needs of the adult learners. This observation is supported by Bhola (1994), who defines functional adult literacy as a combination of literacy and the learning of economic skills. The integration of different learning activities is intended to equip adult learners with different types of skills which they can use to solve problems (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 1996).

According to Proak (2004) non literate and semi- literate adults like to learn activities related to their daily practices such as reading road signs, money transactions, measurements and calculations, addresses, news papers, labels of medicine and reading medical cards.

2.2 The perspective of reference group theory

This theory is based on the assertion that people identify themselves with the social and cultural group to which they belong or with that they aspire to belong to. The group which they belong to is known as the Normative Reference Group (NRG) while that one they aspire to belong to is a Comparative Reference (CRG) (McGivney 1992).

Although reference group theory has a long history, its application to the field of adult education has been an overlooked area. In using reference group theory to study adults' participation, there are several arguments which can be made. For instance, the theory allows for common expectations regarding the socialization process into desired groups. It also explains why members of these groups are

willing to adjust individualistic interest(s) in order to work on behalf of larger concerns.

Group influence on adults

Naturally, a person will do or will not do what other people around him are doing or not doing. Therefore, if an adult is in a group of people who like attending learning programmes, he or she is also likely to attend the same programmes.

Adults like other peers, also experience peer pressure and it can determine whether an adult continues or drops from learning programmes. An example of these peer pressures can be; men in villages telling their fellow men that what they are learning in the centre is fit for women and not for men and some how, this thinking could be a reason why most of the adult learners in evening programmes in Uganda were women. In the case of Comparative Reference Group, people may participate in learning programmes because they want to have new friends who are already participating in these programmes.

It is also common that adults will enrol for learning in learning centres where they see people they admire so that they can get a chance of being closer to them. Dench & Regan (2000) suggest that the influence by others on the individual plays a great role in making an adult interested in learning which can motivate him to enrol in learning programmes.

The influence by family members, peers and teachers is especially of great importance. However, peer influence can also be dangerous to participation in learning activities where an individual can also be convinced to drop out of the programme by peers who have already dropped out or those who have never enrolled themselves in any learning programme. This argument is supported by Calder (1993:72) asserting that adults look at learning as something that will

heighten their job satisfaction or raise their material standards and to enable them improve their quality of life outside working hours.

Perceptions

Comparative reference groups, give individuals a basis for comparing themselves or their group to other individuals or groups. Comparative reference groups also influence individuals' feelings and behaviour.

According to Kroger (1989), people tend to define themselves and others in comparison terms, to judge themselves according to some standards or to see themselves as less better or less privileged than others. They often think that they do not live up to the required standards and this might lead to a low self esteem. Some respond to this inadequacy with depression, anger and social withdrawal while others accept their situation as it is.

Reference theory suggests that an individual's perception of what he or she thinks other people think about him or her affects in some manner the way that individual perceives or feels about him or herself. In this example, another person, or a group of people, influences the individual's perception, and consequently his or her attitudes, behaviours, and norms. Another way to look at this theory is to address the significant role that others play in defining the life-world of group members.

Defining a situation as critical, for example, is to shape whatever solutions are possible to members of that world. For instance, in using reference group theory, members of certain groups will be sensitive to issues they believe are important to them. On the other hand, if adults are convinced that the learning activity is not relevant to their issues at hand, their behaviours will reflect an indifference to that activity.

Rice (1992) and Haihambo (1986) observe that in most African countries, people still believe in their traditions and continue to react along stereo typed gender lines. This observation is widely experienced in adult education programmes in Uganda where the majority of the participants are women and this affects the way men think others look at them in a class in which the majority of the participants are women. Some men easily connect to what is learnt in such programmes as women activities.

Murphy, Morgan, Osborne & Gallacher (2002) suggest that lack of qualifications and self confidence may lead to non participation. People who lack confidence will always not contribute in a discussion and this might make them give up saying that they can not manage learning. This normally happens in adult education programmes where learners of different educational backgrounds are put to learn in the same class. Those with little educational background might feel insecure to participate in class. It should be that adults are grouped in classes according to their educational backgrounds but this in many cases is said but practically not done in Uganda.

To sum it up, the following aspects are essential to reference group theory: Individuals are influenced by groups they believe are important, individuals use certain groups as a guide as to how they should behave, individuals use groups as a basis for comparing themselves to other individuals or other groups, individuals can and do use more than one group as a reference guide and certain groups that individuals use as a point of reference have the ability to influence the attitudes and behaviour of other individuals.

Implication of reference theory to adult's participation

The group in which an adult belongs or wishes to belong will determine whether he/she continues participating or drops out. This suggests that most men from

Uganda are likely not to take part in learning programmes in which the majority of the participants are women because of the cultural beliefs. Some men in Uganda still have a belief that if a man is in a group of women, then he is learning women activities and will not be respected.

2.3 Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory

Understanding adult learners' needs is one of the most important factors in their participation in learning programmes. Hierarchy of needs theory is based on the assumption that all individuals experience continuous needs that require being satisfied to enable them to function effectively. Needs play a vital role in determining human behaviour and in the course of development, every individual has basic needs and as soon as one need is satisfied, another one arises (Maslow, 1954).

According to the hierarchy, needs are understood as either being of a lower level (deficiency needs) or higher level (growth needs). The lower level needs must be satisfied before the higher level ones can begin to operate. Understanding on how these needs operate, helps in understanding adults' motivation to participate in learning programmes and in the long run provide strategies for their persistence in the programmes. Wlodkowski (1985) says that the most pressing felt needs always prompt adults to seek the logical and shortest route to goals that are based on these needs, often leading to a conscious decision to pursue further education in spite of competing roles and time demands.

Motivation to participate can be derived from personal characteristics, needs and objectives (intrinsic) or from external sources such as material rewards (extrinsic). Linsikie (as cited in Madden, 1997) says that motivation is the desire to achieve a goal that has value for the individual.

The reasons why people do or do not choose to participate in learning programmes are multi-dimensional; the decision is a complex one, influenced by factors ranging from self – perceptions and attitudes to the costs and timing of the available courses. Below, the levels of this theory are discussed.

Physiological needs

A person starts at the bottom of the hierarchy (pyramid) and will initially seek to satisfy basic needs, for example food and shelter which he called physiological needs. Once these physiological needs have been satisfied, they are no longer a motivator, the individual moves to the next level.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), it is the home environment that the first important psychological needs are got though most families pay little attention to them. Rice (1992) agrees with this argument by saying that learners who come from conflicting family environments are likely to be under achievers and school drop outs than those who come from stable families. Adult learners think of what to eat for their families, clothes and housing and when these are not met, then there is a high possibility of dropping out from learning programmes.

Safety needs

These include security, and protection needs and could be protective clothing as well as protection against unemployment and loss of income through sickness. Learners have to satisfy their safety needs; the need for a safe learning environment and freedom from fear and anxiety (Seifert, 1991). Often adults fear being laughed at by fellow learners and also other people that may be around their learning centre. This can result into a feeling of insecurity and lack of protection which may lead to drop out or irregular attendance in learning programmes.

Social needs

These needs recognize that most people want to belong to a group. These include the need for love and belonging. Particular groups of learners can attract some adults to join a learning programme because they want to associate with members of that group. This aspect of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is synonymous with the reference group theory which talks about a group's influence on ones' participation or dropping from a learning programme. Some adults are also motivated to join learning programmes just as a means of spending their leisure time as Calder (1993:72) said that a man or a woman, who learns, may be doing so for a social dimension.

Some of the adult learners join learning programmes just to enjoy the facilities at the learning centres like televisions, swimming pools and in Uganda today, most adult learning centres are being encouraged to put in place such facilities that motivate adults to spend their leisure time at the centres.

Esteem needs

Adults have a desire for self respect, peer approval and recognition of their talents and qualities. These needs reflect the fact that many people seek the esteem and respect of others. The educators should give positive comments to learners and also encourage them to respect each other. Knowles (1980) has got a similar thinking in his model of andragogy. He referred to andragogy as the art and science of helping adults to learn as opposed to teaching them like children.

In his model, Knowles emphasizes the need to respect adult learners' views. Calder (1993) argues that it may be a condition of acceptance as a candidate for an election to a political office that one undergoes some training. This is also evident in Uganda where many adults in villages have enrolled in learning programmes in order to be elected as village council chairpersons.

Knowles(1980) and Wlodkowski (1985) state that adults are ready to learn when there is a need to know something in order to perform more effectively in some aspect of life. Wlodkowski (1985:6) observes that adults are responsible people who seek to build their self esteem through pragmatic learning activities in which their competence is enhanced and as they experience success and satisfaction, they are more likely to continue participating in learning programmes.

Maslow (1980) referred to the above four levels of needs as deficit needs or D-needs. If you do not have enough of something, that is, you have a deficit and you feel the need for it which may work as a motivator to enrol for a learning programme so that you can satisfy it.

Self actualization

This is the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs which is a bit different from other levels of needs. Once other levels of needs are satisfied and one jumps to this level, he or she tends to want more and more and people can only attend to self actualization needs once their more basic needs are satisfactorily met. In this level, people are just looking for truth, justice, wisdom and meaning. Cross (1981:55) says that "learning is addictive, the more education people have, the more they want and the more they will get". This could be explained that as adults decide to enrol for a particular objective, they continue to develop other objectives and thus a desire to continue participating in learning programmes.

Adults usually display the need for knowledge through curiosity and are some times inquisitive. Educators must be on the look out to establish the type of need motivating the learner. Some of the needs motivating adults might not be self actualisation based but lower level needs in disguise. This is in contrast with Maslow's theory that needs have to follow the order he put forward because some

people neglect the basic needs to pursue higher ones and some people are motivated to acquire more than one level of the needs at once.

A very large number of adults engage in systematic study for no other reason than self satisfaction, either in the end product or enriched experience through acquired knowledge and skills, or in the process of acquiring them. They study history, archaeology, philosophy, botany, geology, economics and politics for the simple pleasure of understanding (Calder, 1993:72). She continues to say that the more we know, the more conscious we become to know what remains to be learned and that human beings have greater expectations that some knowledge exists to help solve any problem they may have.

Implication of Maslow's theory to participation of adults

The first implication is that adults will participate in a learning programme when their basic deficiency needs are taken care of i.e. that they will be able and willing to participate after they have already obtained food and other survival necessities. This suggests that most adults in developing countries are likely not to take part in the learning programmes since they lack most of the survival needs like food, shelter and clothing. Another implication is that adults are likely to take part in leaning just seeking to know what goes around. Such adults also seek recognition and are likely to drop from participating in the programme if what they expected is not provided.

2.4 Barriers to adult learners' perspective

Cross (1981) discussed the reasons why adults participate, and more importantly why adults do not participate. She defined three barriers to participation in learning as situational, institutional and dispositional.

Situational barriers

These arise from life circumstances at a particular time. Mangano & Corrado (1991:33) point out that academic re - entry can be a harrowing experience for adult learners because the adult learner remains with what ever responsibilities he/she had before enrolling or returning to school if he had withdrawn.

In most adult education programmes, learners are part timers i.e. they have other responsibilities outside the learning centres. According to Derbew (2004), distance was among the reasons found to be causes of drop outs in schools and that most learners accepted that the number of teachers they had, affected their learning. Distance from learning centres especially in rural areas where the paths are bushy can be dangerous to adult participants especially women who can be raped on the way.

Situational barriers can be addressed by targeted programmes that take the specifics of such barriers into account in design and delivery. Single parent status can be made less of a barrier with effective and affordable childcare, and through strategies to ensure that the educational process leads to a more stable living situation for the family.

Institutional barriers

These are problems arising from the procedures and requirements of institutions such as; admission and registration procedures, scheduling, course offerings. Adults can be defined in terms of social roles or developmental process, recognizing that for them the student role is always secondary because they see themselves first in occupational or family roles.

Unlike children, adults make conscious, voluntary decisions to pursue further education (Cross, 1981); they need to see relevancy of learning to their personal

situation (Conrad, 2002); Adult learners need independence and are self directed learners (Knowles, 1980) and any attempt to force them learn what they do not want to learn becomes their barrier and can even result into withdrawal if not properly handled. To address such barriers, institutions can become more flexible in their delivery allowing more part – time study at unconventional times.

Dispositional barriers to adults' participation

These are barriers that arise from peoples' attitudes, beliefs and self perception. Education is an activity essentially associated, even in the minds of educators, with childhood. Even today, when one speaks of education, he or she is normally referring to initial education (Calder, 1993:69). It is therefore not surprising that adult learners are perceived in the same way as child learners and this perception determines the processes and the organization of systematic study for persons beyond the school age. In Uganda the major cause of this type of belief is lack of community sensitisation about the importance of adult education.

Garland (1993) observed: that lack of self confidence by adults and their fear to fail are deterrents to adults' participation in learning programmes. This is because adult education institutions administer tests to learners in a way that shows their grades. This is done in order to give them certificates. Most adult learners like getting certificates although they fear doing the examinations.

2.5 Support and care

Adult learners are special learners who need special support and care in order to increase their participation.

Johnsen (2001:167) observes the need for a flexible educational system where all learners including the adults and children with special needs can benefit. Flexible

learning especially in the time for learning is an important strategy to increase their participation. Educators of adults should be skilful in communicating with adult learners as they give them advice on several choices. Where the learner is not sure of the several choices, then the educator can help him or her to prioritise those choices.

Rice (1992) says that schools which have learners with different problems should have teachers who are honest, sincere, caring, socially responsible, academically good etc. in order to reduce on the drop out. This is still difficult to realize in Uganda where there are still few professional adult educators.

It is very important for an educator of adults to have as much information about his or her learner as possible so as to cater for the specific individual learning needs. This is also supported by Evans (cited in Rumble 2000:223) by saying that educators should understand “their students’ contexts through the histories of the individuals themselves using as much as possible their own words to explore a range of issues that impact or relate to student support.”

Brown (1986) says that perceived lack of support from tutors and difficulties in contacting them are major contributing factors in decisions to continue for the majority of off – campus students participating in his study. Therefore, the development of appropriate tools to carry on the dialogue is necessary. Tait (2000: 291) explains that the use of a variety of media and meaningful engagement with individuals will permit more opportunity to achieve the affective goals of student services, thereby diminishing drop out.

Implication for adult’s participation

Adult learners will drop out if they are handled like child learners. They will need flexibility in whatever they do at the learning centres and their educators should

try to “understand their learners” in order to help them remain participating in learning programmes.

3. METHOD

In this chapter, the design used is presented and reasons for its selection given. This is followed by the methods used to collect data, population of study and sample, pilot study, data collection, a description of how I analysed my data and issues related to reliability and validity.

3.1 Research design

A research design refers to the logical plan a researcher follows in a study process right from the first stages of the study to its conclusion. Yin (2003) says it is a plan that guides the one carrying out the study in the process of collecting, analysing, interpreting data and its conclusion.

I used a case study as my research design. According to Yin (2003), a case study is an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context. It excels at bringing an understanding of a complex issue or objects and can extend experience to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasise detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships and they also produce large amounts of data for analysis.

I chose a case study design with qualitative methods of data collection and analysis because I wanted to study the phenomenon in depth and in its real context. Each individual adult learner of the five adult learners that were interviewed was treated as a case in this study because each individual has his/her own background which makes him/her different from others.

3.2 Population and sample

The population under study was adult learners in all adult learning centres in Uganda both participating and those who had dropped out. Uganda as a country has very many adult learning centres scattered all over. It was therefore not possible for me to conduct the study in the whole country and as a result, I chose two adult learning centres; one in the urban area and another one in the rural area.

The distribution of adult learners registered in the two learning centres (both attending and those who had dropped out) in September 2006 is hereby shown in the table below.

Table 3.1 Adult learners at two adult learning centres in Uganda in September 2006

<div>Sex</div> <div>Learning centre</div>	Women			Men			Total
	Attending	Drop outs	Sub total	Attending	Drop outs	Sub total	
Urban	17	12	29	00	10	10	(39)
Rural	05	16	21	00	07	07	(28)
Total	(22)	(28)	(50)	(00)	(17)	(17)	(67)

The table shows that a total of 67 adult learners were registered in the two adult learning centres and out of these, the majority (50) were women and only 17 were men. It also shows that only women were still participating as all men had dropped

out in both centres. Women from the rural urban learning centre were dropping out more than those ones in the urban learning centre as it is shown in the table that out of 29 women in the urban centre, 12 had dropped out while out of 21 women in the rural learning centre, 16 had dropped out.

Adult learners who had dropped out from the learning programme were included in the study because I wanted to get information from those who had failed to cope up with the difficulties they were going through in their participation in learning programmes.

Main interviewees

A total of five adult learners were selected from the 67 adult learners from the two learning centres indicated above and interviewed as the main interviewees. Three of these were from the urban learning centre; two women still participating and one man who had dropped out. The remaining two adult learners; a woman who was still participating and a man drop out were from the rural adult learning centre.

The original plan was to interview one female adult learner and one male adult learner per learning centre but because one of the adult learners that had been identified from the urban learning centre failed to turn up for two weeks, an alternative adult learner was selected. After having finished conducting the interviews, the adult learner who had been identified in the first place appeared ready to be interviewed thus making a total of three interviewees from the urban adult learning centre.

Additional interviewees

A second group of interviewees consisted of two adult educators one from each of the two learning centres of the study. They were interviewed as supplementary

sources of data to validate its worthiness. Robson (2002) supports this idea of using more than one source of information and says that it provides a means of testing one source of information against the other and as a result improves the quality of data and in consequence the accuracy of findings.

Sampling procedure

The learning centres were purposively identified so as to conduct the study in centres which had information rich interviewees. Adult learners were also purposively sampled for the same purpose of getting information rich interviewees.

Step 1: selection of learning centres

Two adult learning centres were purposively selected for the study; one from an urban setting and the other in the rural setting. The two adult learning centres were purposively selected because of their accessibility and also because they were thought to have adult learners with rich information that I needed to answer the research questions of this study.

Step 2: Selection of adult learners

A sample of five adult learners from the two learning centres was selected. In each of the learning centre, purposive sampling was used to get the information rich interviewees. Using class lists of attendance, adult educators led me in identifying the information rich interviewees.

Criteria used for the choice of interviewees

To qualify for this study as an interviewee, the following were considered:

- (1) They should be speaking a language that I understood
- (2) Both genders should be represented

-
- (3) The sample should include learners who are still participating as well as drop outs from both centres.
- (4) In order to get views from adults who have a lot of life experience, one should be 20 years and above.

The adult educators that I interviewed were also purposively selected. The one from the urban learning centre was selected because of his active involvement in many learning activities that were taking place compared to others while that one from the rural setting was simply picked because he was the only one the learning centre had. The overall sampling procedure was purposeful sampling. According to Gall, Gall, & Borg (2003), purposeful sampling is a procedure which enables the researcher to select informants that are likely to be information rich in respect to the purpose of the study.

3.3 Methods of data collection

In getting data to answer my research questions, interviews and log book information were used.

Interview

The interview was the main method of collecting data for the study. An interview is a conversation between two or more people where questions are asked to obtain information from the interviewee. Kvale (1996) defines it as a conversation that has a structure and a purpose which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in every day conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thorough tested knowledge.

The reasons for choosing this method are:

- (1) Interviews allow probing more deeply using open – form questions to obtain additional information as suggested by Gall et.al (2003).
- (2) The interviewer can also see the facial expressions and other observable characteristics as the interview goes on which can be used to give more information about the problem.
- (3) This method allows the interviewer to rephrase his / her question where the interviewee has not understood.

Developing research instruments

In designing the interview guides, I used my previous experience of teaching adults and also read through other people's research like Nuwagaba (2005) and Campbell (1998) to come up with questions that could bring up rich information, direct the conversation towards the topics and issues I was investigating, guide me to ask questions in a sequence and how to pose follow up questions. Reading through other people's research helped me to know what to do or say next after the interviewee finished answering the last question.

The questions in the guide were put under the following topics:

- (1) Background information of the interviewee
- (2) Reasons for coming to learning centres
- (3) Problems to participation in learning programmes
- (4) Coping strategies

Pre testing the interview guide

In order to minimise the misunderstanding of the questions in the interview guide, I interviewed fellow class mates who come from Uganda using the same questions in the guide before going in for the pilot study. This helped me to find out whether

all the topics in the study were covered. After that, I made some adjustments on the interview guide in order to make it clear to the interviewees.

Log book information

In this study, log book information was used as a way of triangulation. According to Gall et.al (2003), Triangulation offers ample opportunity to examine and cross examine evidences gathered during data collection process in order to establish hidden values which may not be realized if one method and data source is used. Putting this in mind and wanting to have credible data, I used a log book to jot down information from informal observations and conversations. A log book is a variable record where a researcher jots his field notes during the study.

According to Gall et.al (2003), qualitative researchers can write their field notes in a summary of the sequence of events which should help them to stimulate their writing of a more extensive set of notes. In the logbook, I put what I observed on; the physical facilities, location of the centre, nature of the classrooms, instructional materials, interaction among learners and also interaction with their educators, the involvement of learners in the learning process and their physical appearance.

I also jotted in my logbook what I heard from the informal conversations with adult learners other than those who were interviewed, with children who were at the learning centre and with other members of the community who were around the learning centres. The different methods of data collection used complimented each other in enhancing the validity of the research findings.

3.4 Pilot study

I found it very important to conduct a preparatory study before embarking on the main study in order to identify some of the problems which would affect the

collection of useful data. According to Yin (2003), a pilot study helps the Researcher to refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed.

Piloting was very important for me because I had developed my research instruments while in Norway and pre-tested them on fellow classmates therefore, I needed to check whether they were applicable in the local context of my cases. The pilot study was conducted in two adult learning centres in Uganda; one in the urban setting and another one in the rural setting in order to have interviewees with similar characteristics to those of my main study. The main criteria for selecting these learning centres for pilot study were convenience and accessibility as suggested by Yin (2003).

Practical steps taken

I visited the two selected learning centres prior to the study to identify and make appointments with the would be interviewees and there after went in to interview them starting with those ones from the urban area. I interviewed one adult learner and one adult educator from each learning centre. I used a note book to record the interviews in both learning centres.

Practical obstacles in piloting

During the pilot study, the following problems were met:

- (1) Failure to trace the learners because their learning centre had been booked for a graduation party.
- (2) The interview guide had some questions which needed rephrasing because of the way they were asked.
- (3) Writing down the interviewees' views as they spoke was making them nervous and making the process not natural because they would be watching me as I wrote in the book.

I analysed the results of the interviews checking question by question in the interview guide referring to my guiding research questions and decided to rephrase the questions that were not clear and even decided to only write key words and phrases and the rest of the interviews to be tape recorded in the main study. There after, I had discussions with my research advisor from Uganda and later on, one from Norway

3.5 Main study

After discussing with my research advisor from Uganda and agreeing on the procedures to be followed in the data collection process and on modifications made in the instruments, I proceeded for the actual study.

3.5.1 Gaining entry to the field

Permission to reach out to the learning centres was sought from the Department of Gender, Elderly and Disability in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the management of the learning centres, adult educators and the adult learners. I introduced my self to every office I was going to by show of the letter from the Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo which was allowing me to carry out research. After that, I wrote letters to the coordinators of the two learning centres which I took *by* hand myself. I also wrote letters to the adult learners and their educators that were identified for the study. It took me a week to get feedback from the urban learning centre but for the learning centre in the rural setting, I was given a go ahead there and then.

3.5.2 The process of interviewing

After agreeing with my local advisor on the modifications in my interview guide and the procedures to be followed for data collection, I proceeded for the actual study. I made several visits to each of the learning centres before the actual

interviews, in order to get acquainted with their learning programmes. Three visits were made to the urban learning centre while two visits were made to the rural learning centre.

I started with the urban adult learning centre where by I explained to the adult educators and adult learners the purpose of my study that it was purely academic and that the information given to me would remain confidential.

The first adult learner to be interviewed from this learning centre was Jane. I had previously made arrangement with her that I would interview her that day. The adult educator had arranged a classroom for me where I interviewed her from.

The next was supposed to be Peter who did not turn up and when I called him on his mobile phone, he said he had a patient in hospital. Peter was a drop out so it was difficult to get him but we made fresh appointment on phone. He again failed to make it on the day agreed upon, he called and said that he would inform me when he would be ready for the interview. After two weeks without hearing from him, I decided to identify another adult learner who accepted to be interviewed. I made appointment with her and she was interviewed.

I also interviewed one of the adult educators at this learning centre. After interviewing the two learners from the urban learning centre, Peter came and said that he was ready to be interviewed. I interviewed him and he became my third adult learner to be interviewed at this centre. All the interviews at this learning centre were held in 'Luganda' (a local language spoken in central Uganda).

In the learning centre from the rural setting, interviewing went as I had planned. I interviewed Peace first, Henry and then finally I interviewed Tom; their adult educator. All the interviews in this learning centre were conducted in 'Runyankore – Rukiga' (one of the local languages spoken in Western Uganda).

In all the interviews, I would first request the consent of the interviewees and then record their voices. In addition to tape recording their views, I would make my field notes in form of key words and phrases on what I was observing and from the informal conversations and expand on my notes at the end of each day.

3.5.3 Collecting log book information

Observations and conversations

Each time I visited an adult learning centre, observations were made and recorded in my logbook. During the observation, I took the opportunity to record the information on the conditions of the learning centres such as nature of the buildings, size of the classrooms and the instructional materials which could have influences on the participation of adult learners in learning programmes.

I also held informal conversations with the children who were at the centre, adult learners and adult educators apart from those who were interviewed. The main focus of the conversation was on the adults' participation on learning activities. Information got was also recorded in the logbook and it was used in writing the background of the learning centres and in the discussion of the findings of this study.

3.6 Organization of data

3.6.1 Use of pseudonyms

I gave all my interviewees pseudo names as it is an ethical issue particularly in data presentation, analysis and discussion. The use of pseudo names protects the privacy of the interviewees as individuals (Sarantakos, 1998). Tables 3.2 and 3.3 on the next page show how the pseudo names are used against the main interviewees and the two adult educators.

Table3. 2 Pseudo names used against adult learners (cases) who were interviewed

Interviewee no.	Pseudo name	Status	Setting
1	Jane	Attending	Urban
2	Christine	Attending	Urban
3	Peter	Drop out	Urban
4	Mary	Attending	Rural
5	Henry	Drop out	Rural

The table above shows that pseudo names of Jane and Christine were given to interviewees one and two who were female adult learners from the urban learning centre and Peter was used against the third adult learner who was a male from the same learning centre. Mary was used against the fourth interviewee who was a female from the rural centre. The fifth interview who was a male from the rural centre was given a pseudo name of Henry.

Table 3.3 Pseudo names used against adult educators who were interviewed

Interview no.	Pseudo name	Setting
6	<i>Paul</i>	<i>Urban</i>
7	<i>Tom</i>	<i>Rural</i>

The table above shows that the two adult educators were given pseudo names of Paul and Tom. Paul was from the urban learning centre while Tom was from the rural learning centre.

3.6.2 Audio tapes

All the tapes from the seven interviews were labelled using the pseudo names for easy identification which helped me to maintain anonymity during the analysis. The recorded tapes were then transcribed into detailed notes and there after the notes were translated into English.

I used two language experts to translate the notes from the two different local languages to English. The two language experts were secondary school teachers of English language; one who understood ‘luganda’ and another one who understood ‘Runyankole – Rukiga’ (languages used in the interviewing process). The language experts listened to the audio tapes, read through the transcribed and translated work. There after, we held discussions and agreed on the final translated work. The purpose of these discussions was to make sure that the translated work did not change the original message of the interviewees.

3.6.3 Data analysis procedure

Yin (2003) points out that analysis of data involves examining, categorizing, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial prepositions of a study. This is important especially when there is a large chunk of data collected. Data was organized according to the main topics in the interview guide which were generated from the research problem. This helped me to focus on data that was relevant to the study while ignoring others.

I read through all the translated data as a whole before I could start arranging it in order to get a whole picture. After that, I started analysing data from the urban learning centre whereby data for each interview was analysed separately category by category and afterwards a comparison of the views of adult learners was done to look for similarities and differences.

The same procedure was also used on the rural learning centre and after, a cross case analysis was done looking for similar views and different views across the learners. Finally, the results from learners were compared with those of their educators.

3.7 Efforts to secure validity and reliability

According to this study, reliability means the degree to which the researcher manages to be consistent and accurate through out the research process (Creswell, 2003). After formulating the interview guide, a pre- test was carried out before proceeding for field work and while in the field, a pilot study was also conducted on a different population with same characteristics. All this was meant to correct the weakest points of the guide to make sure that it measured what it was supposed to measure according to the purpose of the research. I also made sure that my presence during the interviews did not intimidate or lead the interviewees to give me the answers they thought I wanted.

Validity refers to the degree to which the obtained data is truthful enough to support the conclusions drawn from its (Sapsford, 1999). Therefore; validity of this research refers to the degree to which the research instruments and procedures managed to reveal what was influencing adults' participation in learning programmes in Uganda.

In an attempt to ensure that I collect sufficient information on the topic of study and research questions, two learning centres which were purposefully selected are those that were comprised of learners who spoke the local language that I understood and I did the interviewing myself.

I also tape recorded the interviews but with the consent of the interviewees to increase on validity. I again used language experts to listen to the audio tapes, read through both the transcribed and translated work and there after I had discussions with them to make sure that the translated work represented what they said. The purpose of using language experts was to guard against losing information in the process of transcribing and translating since the guide was in English and was translated into the local languages.

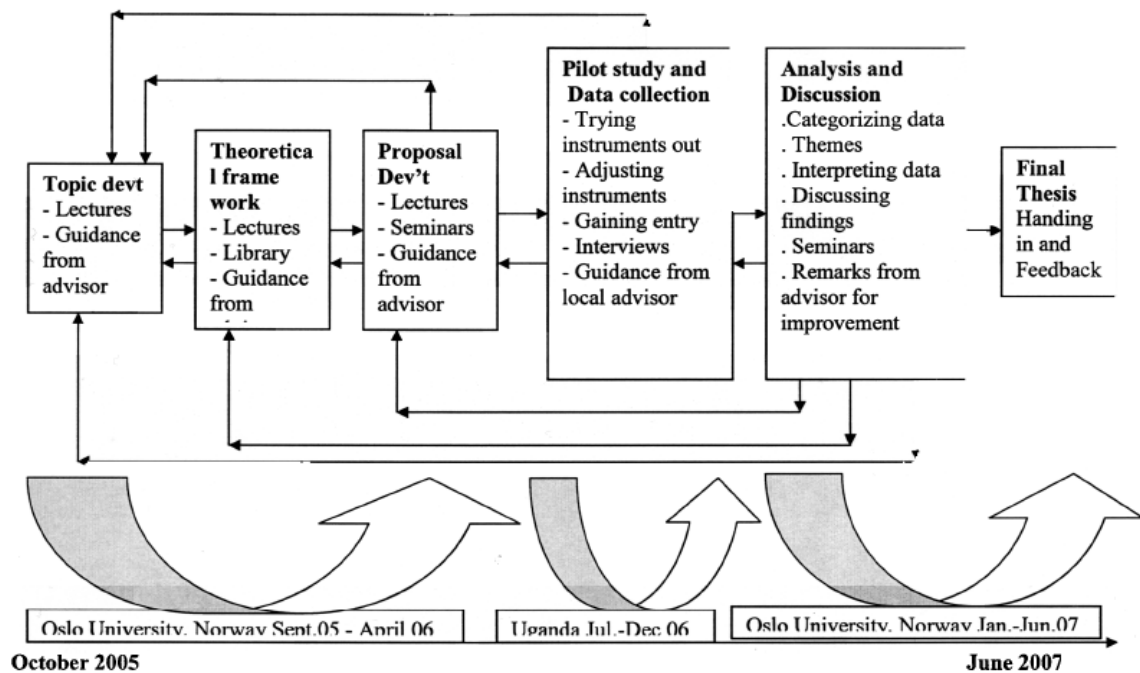
3.8 Informed consent

According to Gall et.al (2003), each participant should be informed about what will occur during the research study, the information to be disclosed to the researchers and the intended use of the research data that are to be collected and that if adults are the participants, they must give their consent.

The purpose of this study was explained to the interviewees. I also informed them that I would record the interviews using a tape recorder and that after transcribing the data, it will be read through to each of them individually to make sure that it represented what they said. I also explained to them that participation in this study was voluntary and that each individual's decision whether or not to participate would not have any effect on them and that any information that is obtained in connection with this study which could be identified with them would remain confidential and that it would be disclosed only with their permission.

In the final analysis, I made sure that words and language that seem to be insensitive to religion, gender, age, ethnicity or tribe were avoided.

3.9 Thesis progression plan 2005 -2007



NB: Arrow Lines show consultations and Progression.

Figure1. Thesis progression plan from 2005 up to 2007

The above plan shows the development of this thesis right from when I started having lectures in research methods up to the final stage of handing it in and getting the feedback from the research committee of the department i.e. from October 2005 up to June 2007. It includes activities done at the University of Oslo and those done from Uganda. The plan also shows how I kept on consulting the work already done to enrich the thesis.

3.10 Limitations of the study

The findings of this study apply to the five adult learners and to the two learning centres. The results can not be generalised to all adult learners in Uganda. However, they can be used to understand the complex issues in the participation of adults in learning programs.

Transcribing the interviews which were in the local languages into English was not easy. However, the errors which could have happened out of this were minimized by two experts in both languages (English and the two local languages) who listened to the interviews and read through the transcribed work. They later on had a discussion with me and agreed on some words to use.



4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The research problem of this study concerned what influences participation of adults in learning programmes in Uganda. The study was conducted in two adult learning centres; one in the urban setting and another one in the rural setting. More specifically the study tries to answer the following research questions:

- (1). What kind of learning activities are adult learners engaged in?
- (2). Why do adults engage themselves in learning activities?
- (3). What kind of barriers do adult learners face as they pursue their education?
- (4). What coping strategies are used for adult learners' persistence in participation?

In this chapter, data is analysed through two main steps. First, a case by case analysis on the five individual learners was conducted. Secondly, a cross case analysis between the five cases was conducted highlighting the similarities and differences inherent across the cases. In addition, interview results from two adult educators are also presented.

4.1 Background information on cases and learning centres

The information in this section stems mainly from the interviews from the participants (learners and educators) but also from informal observations and conversations connected to the centre.

4.1.1 Information on the five cases

The table below, background information about cases is given. There were five cases consisting of three women and two men. The information below, concerns their ages, status, educational background and the settings in which the learning

centres were found. Their ages are given in the range of 10 because some of the learners were reluctant to reveal their actual years.

Table 4.1 Background information on the five cases in the two learning centres in Uganda in 2006

Information Cases	Setting	Age	Educational background	Status
Jane	Urban	21 – 30	Primary 3	Attending
Christine		21 – 30	Primary 3	Attending
Peter		21 – 30	Primary 5	Drop out
Mary	Rural	31 – 40	Did not go to school	Attending
Henry		21 – 30	Primary 2	Drop out

Background information from the five learners of both genders was analysed and grouped into four main categories; Setting, Age, Educational background and Status. Status here refers to whether one was still participating or had dropped out from the programme.

Three of the interviews came from the urban setting while two came from the rural setting. Concerning the ages, four learners were between 21 and 30 years and only one was between 31 – 40 years.

The third category (educational background) shows that four of the participants had some formal schooling varying from two to five years where as one had no formal educational background.

Finally, the category 'status' shows that three learners were still attending (all females) while two had dropped out of the programmes (both males).

4.1.2 Information on the two adult educators

Through the interviews with the two educators, the following information came up: Paul was an educator from the urban setting while Tom was from the rural setting. Paul was between 21 to 30 years and Tom was above 40 years old. Paul had a diploma in social work and social administration and a certificate in adult education while Tom completed primary seven.

4.1.3 Information on the urban learning centre

This centre was situated in a high density area. It had one permanent structure which had two classrooms for adults and other rooms were used as offices for other projects run at the same centre. There were many other people who were coming to the learning centre especially on Wednesdays to participate in the other projects at the centre. Every Saturday, the children of the members of the projects would gather at the learning centre for training in morality and Christian values.

The centre had a wooden structure also used for classes and by the time of this study, it had a leaking roof. Learners who were physically present at the learning centre were women and all men had dropped out.

I noticed that adult learners often arrived at the learning centre earlier than their educators and would stand outside their classrooms because their classrooms would still be locked. There was an organized sitting arrangement where the educators sat in front of the learners. The blackboard which was in poor state was

not being used, instead the educators were writing on manila papers using markers. Adult learners were being allowed to practice writing on manila papers put on the walls of their class rooms. Charts, pictures and maps were put on the walls of the classroom. The centre had a semi – permanent fence made of papyrus carpets all round it with a gate. It had two pit latrines which were being shared by every body at the learning centre. There were no adult learners registered at the learning centre with physical disabilities. This learning centre had three adult educators.

4.1.4 Information on the rural learning centre

This centre was within the home of the adult educator and teaching took place under a mango tree. It had been shifted from the parish (smallest administration unit in Uganda) headquarters. The learners had complained that there was a lot of noise at the parish headquarters and therefore demanded for a change of venue.

There was no clear path to this learning centre; one had to pass through other people's homes in order to reach the centre. Also at this centre, all male adult learners had dropped from the learning programme. The black board was of a poor quality and there was no organised sitting arrangement for learners. There were only two wooden forms at this centre which were used as seats while the rest of the learners sat on the mats and down on the grass.

There was no registered person with physical disability at this learning centre. All facilities like pit latrine and water at the learning centre were owned by the adult educator. Learning time was always in the evenings from around 3.00 Pm to around 6.00 Pm East African standard time. This centre had only one adult educator.

4.2 Information on individual cases

The information on individual cases was extracted from the analysis of the interviews with the five cases. Four main thematic categories were identified through the analysis column as follows:

- (1) Learning activities in which adult learners participated
- (2) Motivation to participation in learning programmes
- (3) Barriers faced by adult learners
- (4) Coping strategies used to remain participating in learning programmes

4.2.1 Case Christine

Christine was a female adult learner and a single mother whose educational background was Primary three. She was between 21 -30 years old and from the urban learning centre.

Learning activities in which Christine participated

When asked the learning activities she was engaged in at the learning centre, she said:

We come here to learn reading and writing, mathematics and also things like; how to make cakes, how to fry meat for packing in packets and we also learn how to make 'pilao' so that if some one has a party, he/she can hire our services and we get money.

'Pilao' is a meal of a mixture of fried meat and rice which is common in East Africa.

Christine's motivation to participate in the learning programme

Christine informed me that she joined the learning programme because she wanted to belong to a literate society being able to read and write with understanding. She was not feeling confident in answering questions from her children and said:

Now when I'm going to a village meeting and they give me a book to write my name, I can not, or what I write there can not be understood. Therefore, I find problems and I say, if my children come from school and ask me, mammy, how do they read this?, this letter is called what? And I don't know what they are saying, then, I feel bad. So when I heard that there were learning programmes for adults here, I decided to come so that in case I'm asked such questions, I can answer them.

Besides acquiring skills to help her improve her performance in the society in which she was living, she revealed that she also joined learning because she wanted to acquire skills to enable her get a reasonable job: "A person like me wants to learn so that I can get a job because if you have never gone to school, you can not get a reasonable job."

Christine said that learning how to cook and pack food was important for her because she could be invited by people who had parties to cook for them and she could make some money and this was a strong motivating factor for her to participate in the programme.

Barriers faced by Christine

Christine said her village mates laughed at her and that some could even abuse her that she did not go to school when she was young. Even on the way to the learning centre, people looked at her with laughter. She said that also at the learning centre especially when they would be learning from out side, people around would laugh at them (adult learners) saying that they were claiming to be learning.

Christine did not like to learn while children at the centre were close to her because she said that they also laughed at adult learners and as means of avoiding them, she said they would learn with classroom doors closed.

According to Christine, heavy workload was also her problem;

I work in a salon but being employed by others and they give me very little money. I also do my work at home myself because I do not have a maid. I have a

challenge because of being a single mother as I have to look for school fees of my children, their clothing and what to eat.

In addition to what she said about the barriers that they (learners) were going through, she revealed that some of her classmates who got jobs had not yet returned to participate in learning: “Some of our classmates who got jobs of cleaning the roads have not come back to learn although they too like studying.”

Christine said that her home was one kilometre away from the centre. She said this was a short distance which she could walk. However, she said she was going to move her home to Namungona which is 4 km away from the learning centre and she was worried of how she was going to manage although she said she would use a ‘boda boda’ (motorbike). This meant that she would be paying for transport every time she went to the learning centre.

She also revealed that when adult educators started asking for money, many participants withdrew. In addition to educators asking for money, she said that some husbands were stopping their wives from participating in learning programmes: “Some husbands also stop their wives from participating in learning programmes although I know only one woman whose husband stopped from participating.”

When asked to mention all she thought was affecting adults’ participation in learning programmes, she said:

The chairs are not good because we would want those ones where you can get where to write from. For toilets, we share them with other people around, we do not have water around, even toilet paper is not available some times, there are also these children who come here every Saturday to learn their own things and some times they come nearer to us to see what we are doing and we chase them away and even some times we close the doors because these children also laugh at us.

Christine also informed me that when some activities were being considered, they (learners) were not consulted especially deciding on the time for classes and she revealed that it demoralized many adult learners especially those whose time for doing their jobs collided with time for going to the learning centre.

Christine's coping strategies for persistence in the learning programme

Christine said that she was able to continue participating in the learning programme because she was getting educator support:

The interaction with our adult educators is not bad because they do not laugh at us, you ask them anything you want and they also told us not to laugh at each other.

She also mentioned managing her time well so that every activity she had to perform was done:

I wake up very early like at 6.00 am and do my home chores and by around 9.00 am, I finish and come here to learn. I leave home after children have gone to school...

4.2.2 Case Jane

Jane was a female adult learner, single and with no children. She was between 21 and 30 years old. She had studied up to Primary three when she was young.

Learning activities in which Jane participated

Jane informed me that they learnt how to read and write. She mentioned many other subjects too;

We learn how to read and write, English language, Luganda language, learning how to cook; for example, our local food and also learning how to look after our babies in case we produce them and also how to handle husbands.

Jane's motivation to participate in the learning programme

Jane explained that she joined learning because of the many challenges she was facing as a result of not knowing how to read, and said:

I wanted to know how to read because I would get many challenges like people laughing at me, or like a friend writing to me a letter and I take it to another person to read it for me. This used to pain me and I decided to come and learn.

When asked about how she thought she was going to benefit from the learning programme in which she was participating, she said: “It will help me because if I get business, I can know how to manage it...” However, she said that some times she did not participate whenever they would be learning an activity that was not of her interest although she did not in particular mention any such activity. This is what she said: “Some times when one is busy or they are learning an activity that I’m not interested in, then, I don’t participate in it.”

Barriers faced by Jane

Jane revealed that she feared doing examinations at the learning centre; “Examinations are not easy but I can do them and even if it means repeating, I repeat and do them again. Yes I do them although I fear them.” She also identified another problem adult learners face as; Negative attitudes of community members towards adults’ participation in learning programmes and said;

They say oh! This girl does not know English! But we always see her pass here ... others laugh at me that you see that girl, she is smart but she did not go to school. They say things like that which can discourage you as a person.

According to Jane, physical conditions at the learning centre were not so bad although she wanted an independent place to learn from where there would be no other people doing other activities not related to learning. She also revealed that the chairs were not favourable for them (learners) and even she did not like the

sharing of facilities at the learning centre with other people who were doing other things;

The chairs on which we sit are also not good for writing. For example we would want desks to help us write well because it is difficult for beginners to write without desks. We also share toilet facilities with children and other people who do other things here.

Jane said she was working at the learning centre cleaning the offices and preparing meals for staff. When asked how she manages to do both learning and working, she said it was difficult but that she would come early in the morning to clean the offices and some times she would go out to prepare tea, wash cups and prepare lunch for staff while her classmates were in class learning. She also revealed that some times the teaching did not take place due to personal problems of the educators:

We need more teachers for example we have one English teacher and some times our educators have their own problems in their homes and they don't come to teach us.

Jane's coping strategies for persistence in the learning programme

When asked how she was coping with her participation in learning activities, she said that she was managing her time well. She said their educators in addition to teaching them, also provided counselling services especially whenever there was a problem. She also said that adult educators would organise fundraisings for those learners who would be having financial problems. She said that they also had prayers organised by adult educators

4.2.3 Case Peter

Peter was a male adult learner aged between 20 and 30 years and had dropped out of the learning programme by the time of this study. He was married with one child.

Learning activities in which Peter participated

He said that before he dropped out, they were learning how to read and write Luganda language, English language, numeracy and business skills at the centre. He also mentioned that there were some cooking lessons and tried to explain that men were also free to attend although he said that cooking looked like a women activity in nature.

Peter's motivation to participate in the learning programme

Peter revealed that his main objective of joining the learning programme was that he wanted to acquire knowledge because he was a local leader;

I came here because I wanted to know; to get knowledge because I'm a leader of people in the local council. I also wanted people to use me as an example that even old people can learn and go to the University.

He also informed me that he wanted to get a certificate which was given to adult learners so that he could show it to his children in future that he also studied.

Barriers faced by Peter

Peter revealed that the mixing up of learners of different categories also affected their participation. He gave an example of men who felt ashamed to learn from a group of women that other men would not respect them. He also informed me that learners who were very old were feeling ashamed to sit and learn with the younger adults.

According to Peter, some of the content in the curriculum was not agreed upon by the learners so he did not know how it came in;

Other adult learners went a way because you know old people, if he wants to learn how to make a cake; he wants it there and then. He does not know that the adult educator has his own programme. For example, if he wants to learn English, and the educator has prepared some thing else, then that one becomes a problem because he sees the adult educator as of the same age ...

Another barrier to adults' participation in learning identified by Peter was learning from the compound which he said was bad because some members of the public would inconvenience learners when ever they were passing by. He also complained of the children at the learning centre whom he said were making some adults uneasy by laughing at them.

Peter believed that adult learners' heavy work load was affecting their participation in learning programmes; "Work is a big problem for us who have to work and at the same time learn; for example, when work becomes too much on me, I disappear from the learning centre..."

Apart from having too much work, Peter said he had also a lot of responsibilities of looking after his family and also as a local leader. He said he had to look for what to eat for his people and also to look for money to pay rent for the house.

Peter's coping strategies for persistence in the learning programme

Peter said that the relationship between learners and educators was good although he admitted that it was not easy to handle old people. He said that their educators gave them advice and even counselled them on family affairs and even talked to them on morality issues. He also mentioned one of the strategies of increasing learners' participation as good timing for when learning activities should be conducted. He however said that this strategy had its weakness because some times it was difficult for learners to agree on which time was convenient and he said;

We start our lessons from 9.00 am to 12.00 noon. These hours can also not be good for all of us because some work in the morning, others in the afternoon and others in the evening. So it is always difficult to get time that is convenient for all although it is a good strategy for the majority.

4.2.4 Case Mary

Mary was a female learner who was aged 40 years. She was married and she had six children and all of them were in school. She had never gone to school her self.

Learning activities in which Mary participated

Mary informed me that they were learning several subjects at the learning centre which included learning how to read and write, numeracy and English language, she said;

We learn how to read and write our names, other people's names, numeracy and looking at something, write it down and understand it, writing stories and English language.

Mary's motivation to participate in the learning programme

Mary said she joined the learning program because after getting married she found that things were getting difficult for her;

For us in my father's family, only boys were allowed to go to school, but when I got married, I realized that learning was important as things were becoming very difficult for me because of not going to school. So when they brought this learning of adults, then I said I have to join so that I can know how to read and write. Taking a letter to some one else to read for me pains me a lot.

Barriers faced by Mary

Mary said her village mates had not seen why she was participating in the learning programme and they used to frustrate her efforts and she said;

My village mates say I'm a time waster because they don't know what I'm looking for, although some say I can get some thing out of it. Those who call me a time waster say I can not learn at my age but for me I keep quiet and continue.

Another problem of adult learners highlighted by Mary was that adults do not want to learn from where there is noise:

The learning centre is okay because there is no noise. We started from the parish Head quarters but people complained that children were disturbing them while learning and then our educator brought us here.

When asked about where they sat while learning, she said:

We sit on mats and others on wooden forms and then the chalkboard is put against this tree and we sit under it and learn although some men did not like sitting on the grass.

Mary identified heavy work load as her problem in participating in the learning programme. “I attend to my garden; have a small shop and a tea room. In addition to that, I also do my family chores because I do not have a house maid.” She also revealed a problem of sickness which also she said determined very much adult’s participation in learning programmes; “We also have a problem of diseases in our area and when a learner is sick or a child or even another family member, then, one will not attend.”

Mary’s coping strategies for persistence in the learning programme

Mary said she was managing to continue participating in the learning programme because she was doing her work before she went to the learning centre. She also said their educator was always giving them advice: “Our educator tells us that some one else can teach us in his absence and he also gives us advice on how to solve our problems so that we remain participating.”

4.2.5 Case Henry

Henry was a male adult learner who was aged between 21 and 30 years. His educational background was Primary Two. He had a wife and four children and had dropped from the learning programme by the time of this study.

Learning activities in which Henry participated

I asked him the activities that they were learning at the centre and he said: “We were learning, writing, reading and numeracy. This helped me because now I’m able to do some simple calculations in my business and so on.”

Henry’s motivation to participate in the learning programme

When asked what motivated him to join the learning programme as an adult, he said: “I wanted to learn how to read and write especially my name and also to know how to do calculations for my business.” He also revealed that he joined the programme because he wanted to be a step ahead of his wife in as far as education was concerned and said;

My wife is learned. She completed Primary six and she can handle well my business but I also have that need of at least being one class ahead of her, which is Primary seven although I would want to continue up to the University.

Barriers faced by Henry

According to Henry, some days were not good for him as a result of what was being taught, he said;

Our educator has his own book where he gets what to teach from. He starts from page one, then page by page up to the end of the term. The next term he will start from where he stopped. This means that some days we don’t learn business skills.

He said that his village mates were giving him hard time by saying so many bad words to him: “Whenever my village mates find me at the learning centre, they laugh at me saying that I’m a time waster...” Henry also revealed that he had an intention of re starting to participate in the learning programme up to primary seven and even university but he was worried about his family: “I want to come back and continue learning up to primary seven and even go on up to the university but I have a problem of where to leave my family.” Another problem that learners were facing according to Henry was about learners’ heavy work load, he said;

Adult learners have a lot of work and they can not remain at the learning centre for along period like attending in the morning and going home around midday and then come back to the learning centre in the evening for example I have too many things to do which have affected my participation.

Henry also revealed that their educator was treating them like young children and as a result he said he feared him: “Even if you are an adult, our adult educator treats you like they treat children in Primary schools and I fear him as my teacher.”

Henry’s coping strategies for persistence in the learning program

Henry revealed that there was adult educator support to learners, and said; “Our adult educator used to tell us how to behave in society and even giving us advice in case one has problems.”

4.3 Cross case analysis

This section tries to compare and summarize the data from the five individual cases. This study consisted of five individual cases, and as such it represents what Yin (2003) refers to as a multiple case study. Below the results of a cross case analysis on the five cases is presented.

Learning activities in which adult learners participated

As the individual analysis revealed, the five learners participated in four main learning activities. The table on the next page shows the distribution of the activities of the five learners according to categories.

Table 4.2 Learning activities in which the five adult learners were participating in the two learning centres in Uganda in September 2006

L. activity Cases	Reading and writing	Learning Languages		Home related activities			Numeracy and Business skills		Total
		English	Luganda	Cooking	Baby care	Handling husbands	Numeracy	Business	
Christine ^u	X			X			X		(3)
Jane ^u	X	X	X	X	X	X			(6)
Peter ^u	X	X	X	X			X	X	(6)
Mary ^r	X	X					X		(3)
Henry ^r	X						X	X	(3)
Total	(5)	(3)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(4)	(2)	(21)

Key:

^u means that the interviewee is from the urban setting.

^r means that the interviewee is from the rural setting.

x means the learning activity participated in

Blank box: means the adult learner did not participate in that activity

Numeracy refers to learning how to count and do some simple calculations.

Luganda is one of the local languages in Uganda spoken by the people from the central region.

The table shows that all together 21 different learning activities were mentioned by adult learners. Four main categories of learning activities were identified including seven sub categories see Learning languages, Home related activities, and Numeracy and Business Skills. Jane and Peter mentioned six learning activities each and the rest (Christine, Mary and Henry) mentioned three learning

activities each. Reading and writing was a learning activity mentioned by all the adult learners that were interviewed.

Learning English language was mentioned by three learners while Luganda language was mentioned by two learners. Cooking was identified as a learning activity by the three learners from the urban learning centre and no one from the rural centre mentioned it.

Baby care and learning how to handle husbands were mentioned by Jane only, who was from the urban centre. Numeracy was mentioned by four adult learners and it is only Jane who did not mention it. Business skills as a learning activity was mentioned by two learners (both males) and from different learning centres.

Motivation to participation in learning programmes

The findings indicate that adult learners had both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as forces behind their motivation. See table 4.4 below.

Table 4.3 Motivation among Adult learners to participate in learning programmes in the two learning centres in Uganda in September 2006

<div>Motivator</div> <div>Cases</div>	Intrinsic motivation					Extrinsic motivation			Total
	To be literate	Compensating formal education	Be an example	Get knowledge	Get respect	Get a job	Challenge from wife	get a certificate	
Christine ^u	X				X	X			(3)
Jane ^u	X								(1)
Peter ^u			X	X				X	(3)
Mary ^r	X	X							(2)
Henry ^r	X						X		(2)
Total	(4)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(11)

Key:

^u means that the interviewee is from the urban setting

^r means that the interviewee is from the rural setting

x means what motivated the learner to participate in the programme

Blank box means that the motivator did not apply to the learner

Intrinsic motivation refers to forces from within an adult learner that makes him participate in the learning program.

Extrinsic motivation refers to forces outside the adult learner that makes him participate in the learning program.

The table above shows what motivated adult learners to participate in learning programs. They were grouped into two main categories; Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to internal driving forces to participate in learning programs within an individual himself or her self. Intrinsic motivation was sub

categorised into five sub categories of which the dominant one was “to be literate”. Other sub categories of intrinsic motivation are “compensating formal education”, “be an example”, “get knowledge” and “get respect”. Each of these sub categories were mentioned by one adult learner.

Extrinsic motivation

This refers to external forces that drive a person into participating in a learning programme. Extrinsic motivation was sub categorised into three sub categories as follows: “getting a job”, “challenge from wife”, and “get a certificate”. Each of these sub categories was also mentioned by one learner. Adult educators mentioned what motivated the learners to participate as the activities which they were offering at the centres, wanting to reduce on ignorance and acquire skills which could make them avoid being cheated in what ever they sold.

Barriers faced by adult learners

The term barriers refers to difficulties arising from attitudes, ones situation at a given time or practices and procedures of institutions that exclude or discourage adults from participating in learning programmes.

The data reveals that adult learners in the two learning centres in Uganda were experiencing several problems as indicated in the table below.

Table 4.4 Barriers faced by adult learners of the two adult learning centres in Uganda in Septembers 2006

Barrier Cases	Dispositional barriers			Situational barriers			Institutional barriers						Total
	Laughed at	Husbands stop wives	Fear exams	Work load	Distance	Sickness	Sharing facilities	Timing of program	Rigid curriculum	Methods of teaching	Pay fee	Few educators	
Christine ^u	X	X		X	X		X	X			X		(7)
Jane ^u	X		X	X			X					X	(5)
Peter ^u	X			X				X	X	X			(5)
Mary ^r	X			X		X	X						(4)
Henry ^r	X			X					X	X			(4)
Total	(5)	(1)	(1)	(5)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(25)

Key

^u means that the interviewee is from the urban setting

^r means that the interviewee is from the rural setting

x means the experienced/mentioned by the learner

Blank box means barrier not experienced/mentioned by the adult learner

The table above shows the barriers that adult learners experienced. They were grouped into three main categories; attitudinal barriers, situational barriers and institutional barriers.

Dispositional barriers

Attitudinal barriers as a mean category was grouped into the following sub categories: “laughed at”, “husbands stop wives” and “fear exams”. All the five

adult learners mentioned that they were being laughed at while “husbands stop wives” and “fear exams” were mentioned by one learner each.

Situational barriers

This was also sub categorized into three subcategories. The first sub category was identified as “workload”. This was mentioned by all the five learners and the remaining two sub categories (distance and sickness) were mentioned once each.

Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers as a major category was sub categorized into six sub categories. The dominant sub category was “sharing of facilities” which was mentioned by all the three female learners (Christine, Jane and Mary).

The other sub categories of “timing of programmes”, “rigid curriculum”, and “methods of teaching” were mentioned by two learners each while the remaining sub categories of “pay fee” and “few educators” were mentioned by one learner each. Adult educators also identify similar barriers to adults’ participation to those identified by adult learners. Both adult educators identified learners being laughed at, husbands stopping their wives, workload, lack of facilities and curriculum rigidity.

Coping strategies used for persistence in learning programmes

The term coping strategies refer to means devised in order for one to keep participating in learning programmes.

The next table shows the coping strategies used by the five learners in the two learning centres in Uganda.

Table 4.5 Coping strategies used by adult learners to persist in learning programmes in the two learning centres in Uganda in September 2006

Strategy Cases	Counselling		Having timetables	Peer support	Good timing of program	Total
	Get advice	Praying				
Christine ^u	X		X			(2)
Jane ^u	X	X	X	X		(4)
Peter ^u	X				X	(2)
Mary ^r	X		X			(2)
Henry ^r	X					(1)
Total	(5)	(1)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(11)

Key

^u means that the interviewee is from the urban setting

^r means that the interviewee is from the rural setting

x means that the coping strategy was mentioned by the adult learner

Blank box means that the coping strategy was not mentioned by the adult learner

As shown in the table above, several coping strategies were mentioned by the learners. In the analysis, four main categories and two sub categories were identified (see counselling).

Counselling

Counselling as a main category was sub grouped into two sub categories of “get advice” and “praying for learners”. All the five learners mentioned the “get advice” while one learner (Jane) mentioned “praying”.

Having time tables

Having timetables was mentioned by three learners of the five (Christine, Jane and Mary). The only two male learners that were interviewed (Peter and Henry) did not mention having time tables as their strategy.

Peer support

Peer support was mentioned by only one learner (Jane) out of the five learners in the two learning centres.

Good timing for programmes

This category was also mentioned by only one learner (Peter) out of the five learners in the two adult learning centres.

Reflections on the five cases

All the five learners seemed to have a strong intrinsic motivation to participate in the learning programs. Christine had interest in participation as she insisted that she did not mind about those who laugh at her and her realisation of the importance of education encouraged her to put her children in school. Jane had hard time also as she had a job at the same learning centre where she was learning as she left her classmates in class to go and prepare meals for the staff.

Peter had showed a lot interest as he did not make it at first for interviews but later on insisted to come despite the problems he had. It seemed he had a lot of responsibilities as he mentioned that he was a counsellor in the local council and also that he had to look after his family. Mary's lack of formal educational background was her main motivation to participating and she was contented with what she was learning.

Henry although he had dropped, he still had a hope of going back to the learning centre. He seemed to have partly achieved his objectives as he mentioned that the numeracy skills he got from the centre helped him much in his business.

4.4 Information from adult educators

4.4.1 Paul (urban)

He was a male adult educator in the urban learning centre and was aged between 20 and 30 years. He had a Diploma in social work and social administration plus a certificate in adult education.

Learning activities in which adult learners participated

Paul mentioned learning activities that were offered at the learning centre as: writing, reading, numeracy, tie and dye and other subjects taught in primary schools. He also said that learners were given lessons in skills that helped them to do their daily work and made them functional in their communities.

Adult learners' motivation to participate in learning programmes

Paul said that adult learners were motivated by the activities that were offered at the learning centre; "People out there have many things that motivate them to learn but in most cases, learning activities that we have here are the ones that bring them."

Barriers faced by adult learners

Paul revealed that adult learners of different levels and categories were being put to learn together despite their differences and he defended this action by saying that different categories of learners learnt from each other when they were together in the same class.

When asked about the curriculum of the programme, he said that adult learners were going to the centre having made decisions on what to learn. He said this was a problem because the curriculum had to also accommodate what the ministry in charge of adult education wanted them to teach which some times interfered with the learners' decisions on what to learn.

He revealed that adult learners feared doing examinations although they liked getting the certificates at the end of the course. Paul was aware that the presence of other people other than learners at the centre was a problem. He said that it disturbed their concentration because they feared being laughed at and that some times they would close the doors.

He mentioned other problems adult learners were facing as; had few chairs, lack of money and some husbands stopped their wives from participating. He also revealed that they had rules and regulations which they designed together with the learners which they had to follow. He gave an example of making roll calls and that when ever a learner missed four times in the register, then he/she would be told to remain at home until he/ she learnt how to manage time. However Paul did not recognise that this was a problem which could result in learners completely deserting the program, he simply thought it was a strategy of checking their attendance.

Coping strategies for adults' persistence in learning programmes

When asked how the learners were able to participate despite the many problems they were going through, he said that adult educators gave them support and even prayed for those who had problems.

According to Paul, incentives and facilities for social life which were at the centre were being used to attract learners to remain participating in the program. He said that visual aids like films and posters were being used to attract learners to the

program. He also revealed that there was a plan to start a club that was to give out money to learners as loans to help those who had financial problems.

4.4.2 Tom (rural)

He was a male adult educator in a rural setting who was 42 years. He was married with children. His formal educational background was primary seven.

Learning activities in which adult learners participated

I asked him the learning activities offered to adult learners at the centre and he said that they offered; reading and writing, skills to develop learners' homes, sanitation and other subjects taught in primary schools.

Adult learners' motivation to participate in learning programs

When asked about what he thought was encouraging adults to come and participate in learning, he said that they were participating because they wanted to remove ignorance from their homes and also get skills which would help them avoid being cheated in markets.

Problems faced by adult learners

Tom revealed that both the learners and himself as an adult educator did not participate in the development of the content of the curriculum. He just received books from the district officials which he said was not good because adults some times would be having some thing else that they wanted to learn. He said that as a result some learners whose pressing needs were not immediately met would shy away.

He identified other problems that adult learners were facing as; village mates laughing at his learners, some husbands not allowing their wives to regularly participate, learning under a mango tree especially when it rained, lack of toilet for

the centre and lack of chairs. He also said that the learning centre had some regulations which the learners set themselves. He gave an example of time of arrival which learners were failing to stick to.

Coping strategies for adults' persistence in learning programmes

On the strategies for keeping learners participating, Tom said that he was making roll calls and in the next session he would warn those who were absent in the previous session. He revealed that he was encouraging learners to keep coming to the learning centre. He also informed me that some times he could organise songs to make the centre lively.

He revealed that he was buying excise books and pencils for adult learners because they would tell him that they some times failed to participate because they did not have money to buy books.

4.5 Comparisons of findings from learners and their educators

Having presented all relevant findings that tend to show what influences adults' participation in learning programmes in the two adult learning centres in Uganda, I find that there were similarities and differences between what was said by learners and their educators.

Common views of both learners and their educators

The following were common views among the learners and the educators who were interviewed:

- (1). Both adult learners and their educators mentioned reading, writing and numeracy as learning activities in which adult learners were participating.
- (2). Low opinion on adults going to school by members of the community was mentioned by both the learners and their educators.

(3). Learners and their educators reported that there was some rigidity in tuning the curriculum content to the needs of adult learners.

(4). They both revealed that heavy workload had a negative impact on adult learners' participation in learning programmes.

(5). Counselling of adult learners was mentioned by both learners and their educators as one of the strategies used for adult learners' persistence in learning programmes.

The following views made a difference between learners and their educators

(1). Learners did not mention the nature and lack of buildings as having an impact on their participation while it was brought forward by their educators.

(2). Learners reported having few educators as their problem to participation which the educators did not.

(3). Paying for a subject Learners mentioned said that paying for some particular learning activities contributed to some learners dropping out. They singled out English language as one of the learning activities that learners were asked to pay for.

(4). Learners also reported that some times they learned from the compound outside in the compound which they said they did not like because people would laugh at them.

(5). It was reported by learners that sickness had an influence on their participation in the learning programmes

(6). Adult learners also reported that they were treated like children by their educator which might have been the cause of some of them dropping out of the programmes.

(7). The educators reported that they organised social learning activities and distributed materials like books and pencils to learners as a means of keeping them attracted to the learning programmes.

(8). Educators also reported that they kept registers of learners and every time they had a class, they would make a roll call. They said they used this as a means of checking on the learners' attendance.

5. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research problem focussed on the following research questions:

- (1) What kind of learning activities are adult learners engaged in?
- (2) Why do adults engage themselves in learning activities?
- (3) What kind of barriers do adult learners face as they pursue their education?
- (4) What coping strategies are used for adult learners' persistence in learning programs?

A case study with qualitative methods of data collection and analysis was used to study the phenomenon in depth and in its real context. Five adult learners from two adult learning centres were interviewed and two of their educators; one from each of the centres that provided the five cases were also interviewed.

Data was collected using interviews as the main method. Log book information, informal observations and conversations were also used as additional methods of data collection.

In this chapter the study results are discussed in relation to previous studies. Finally, the results are discussed with reference to theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2; Theoretical orientations. These include; Reference group theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, Barriers to participation as identified by Cross (1981).

5.1 Discussion of findings in relation to previous studies

This section of the discussion looks at how the findings of this study relate to previous study findings.

5.1.1 Learning activities in which adults participate

As we saw above, the main findings on the learning activities indicated that adult learners were participating in activities that equipped them with skills that could make them functional in their homes and communities.

The learning activities in which adults were participating include: Reading and Writing, Numeracy skills, Languages and Home related activities. This finding is in line with Proak (2004). He found out that non literate and semi – literate adults like to learn activities related to their daily practices. This affirms that activities of adult learners should be those which are designed from what concerns their daily lives and in order to have their needs addressed in the learning activities, a needs assessment should be first conducted.

Further findings also indicate that adult educators followed up learning activities the adult learners needed, although Paul (urban adult educator) admitted that some times he had to teach what the government wanted to be taught: “...we meet adult learners and discuss with them what to learn but we also have time to teach what the ministry wants us to teach them...”. Adult learners also reported that some of the content of what they were learning was not agreed upon.

This finding agrees with what Knowles (1980) suggested, that adult learners need independence and are self directed and that any attempt to force them learn what they do not want, becomes their barrier and can even result into withdrawal if not properly handled. In the present study, the adult educator demonstrated his concern about interfering with learners’ needs. The lack of flexibility in what was being learnt could have been the reason for male learners to drop out of these programs.

In addition, the findings of the present study indicate that reading and writing had a dominant position in learning activities mentioned by learners from both rural and urban learning centres. The reason could be that most adult learners in Uganda have a poor formal educational background, (see table 4.1) then, who ever enrolls for learning, wants to acquire these skills which are very important in one's daily life. Numeracy which was dominant is also important in every day life of a person, as numeracy skills are needed in whatever business is done. English language was also reported as one of the most dominant learning activities, and this might be because English language is an official language for communication in Uganda, meaning that all office jobs require understanding and speaking it.

The two adult educators in the study reported that they were also picking some subjects from primary school curriculum to be taught to adult learners. This was also observed by Nuwagaba (2005) when he said that English lessons to be taught to learners were being drawn from primary school curriculum. This might be a good thing as it makes adults put themselves in the learning situation, but it can also lead adults to think they are studying childish things which can result in their drop out from participating.

Further findings reveal that some of the learning activities were labelled as "women activities" and an example of cooking lessons were given. This also agrees with what Rice (1992) and Haihambo (1986) observed: people especially in Africa still believe in their traditions and continue to react to stereo typed gender lines. Such beliefs within communities could be a reason why most adult learning activities in Uganda are dominated by female learners.

Summed up, there is an indication that most of the learning activities that were identified by both the adult learners and their educators are those that provide adults with skills for immediate application in their daily lives.

5.1.2 Motivators of adult learners to participate in programmes

Understanding what motivates adults to participate in learning programmes is one of the most important factors for increasing their persistence in these programmes.

Findings indicate that Peter had an inner motivation when he said he had joined the learning programme just to get knowledge. This might be in agreement with the aspect of self actualization in the hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1954). At this level, people are just looking for truth, justice, wisdom and meaning.

Findings of the present study further indicate that some learners might have dropped out after getting what they came to the learning centre for. For example, Case Henry, who had dropped out said: “We were learning, writing, reading and numeracy. This helped me because now I’m able to do some simple calculations in my business and so on”.

The learning environments of both learning centres were in a poor state. The urban centre, although it had a permanent building, it also had a wooden one which was in bad shape. The learning centre in the rural area had no building at all. Teaching was under the tree. Bronfenbrenner (1979) observed that motivation of learners starts with the home environment. However, in the present study learners from the rural learning centre did not report the poor state of their learning centre. It was only their educator who reported that lack of buildings at their centre was a burden to learners, especially when it rained as they could not attend then.

It is also possible that adult learners were attracted to participate in the learning programs because of the activities that the centres were providing as reported by their educators. For example, Paul (urban adult educator) said; “People out there

have many things that motivate them to learn but in most cases, learning activities that we have here are the ones that bring them.”

There is an indication that Christine was motivated to participate in the learning programme because of the challenge she got when she failed to take on the job she had been offered because she did not know English. This argument is supported by Calder (1993:72), asserting that adults look at learning as something that will heighten their job satisfaction or raise their material standards and to enable them improve their quality of life outside working hours (see Chapter 2). According to my experience with the 2001 elections in Uganda, people who did not have at least a primary seven certificate were not allowed to participate even at the lowest level as election officials. After the elections, many people of those who were turned down as election officials, enrolled in adult education programs so that they could get the requirements to get the jobs.

5.1.3 Barriers to adults’ participation

The five adult learners that were interviewed reported that they were laughed at by community members. This could be as a result of community members still considering learning to be a field for young children not fit for adults.

As presented in Chapter 2, Calder (1993) had similar thinking when he said that even today; some people still consider education to be a field for children. This might be a cause for dropping out, as some people might regard adult learners to be time wasters.

Heavy workload as a barrier was also reported by adult learners in the present study, as it was affecting their participation negatively. Case Peter said; “work is a big problem for us who have to work and at the same time learn; for example, when work becomes too much on me, I disappear from the learning centre...”

This is in accordance with what Mangano & Corrado (1991) found: adults come to the learning centres as part timers, they remain with whatever workload they had before joining the program. In the present study, learners had other things to do in addition to learning, possibly explaining why many had dropped out by the time of this study.

The results also showed that the adult educator in the rural area was still using traditional methods of teaching adults instead of using andragogical methods of facilitating adult learners. This was revealed by Case Henry when he said that their adult educator treated them as if they were children. This was confirmed by the adult educator himself when I asked him about the same issue. He replied that they were learners and he was their teacher.

In addition, the study findings reflect that adult learners had responsibilities to fulfil in addition to participating in learning. Case Peter reported that he had a family in town which he had to feed and pay house rent, Case Jane said she was looking after her brother's two children, Case Christine had three children whom she had to feed and pay school fees for, Case Henry had a family where he was a breadwinner. If he left home he did not know how it could survive. Case Mary, had five children who were in school and she had other family responsibilities. This is in line with what Mangano & Corrado (1991) observed: adult learners come to the learning and remain with all the responsibilities they had before joining the learning programme (see Chapter 2).

In this study, the adult learners faced a lot of pressure from other responsibilities they had, even from their workplaces. This made their participation irregular and might also have been the cause of dropping out for some learners. It was also revealed that there was some rigidity in the curriculum content. Case Henry said that their educator had his book which he was using to read from and then teach

them from page one and that some times they would not learn what they would have wished to learn. This was also reported in the urban learning centre when Peter said that cooking lessons were fit for women and not men.

Case Jane also reported that when they were learning what she did not like, she did not attend. This issue of rigid curriculum content was also raised by both the two educators. Paul (urban adult educator) said that they taught what the learners wanted but they also had to teach what the government wanted them to teach. Tom (rural adult educator) reported that neither the learners nor he himself participated in the designing of the curriculum. He was called at the district and given books to follow in teaching adults. This could have been caused by the Ministry doing needs assessment in some parts of the region and then generalise the curriculum to all adults in the whole region.

The finding agrees with the observations of Conrad (2002) that adults need to see relevancy of learning to their personal situation. There is a strong indication that such learning programs that do not involve their learners in decision making may leave out key activities that would have met the learners' needs, thus enabling them to meet their expectations.

It was also reported that adult learners feared doing examinations. The fear to fail by adult learners was also observed by Dakenwald and Merriam (1982) as deterrents to adults' participation in learning programs and the same argument was also supported by Garland (1993). This might be one of the reasons why adult learning programs start with many learners in Uganda, but towards the last stages of the course, learners are very few in numbers. Perhaps educators should design participation certificates for adult learners who fear doing examinations.

5.1.4 Coping strategies for adult learners' persistence in programmes

The study reveals that the learners were taking some initiatives to seek advice from their educators on issues that would be interfering with their participation. The educators provided support to adult learners through counselling them in order to increase their participation in the programs. This was also observed by (Brown, 1986): educators should explore a range of issues to help support learners in their context and encourage them to seek advice when they had problems that might impact on their participating.

As presented in chapter four, Case Jane mentioned that their adult educators were praying for them whenever they got problems, this was also mentioned by her educator. Possibly prayers came in because this learning centre had a background of Christianity.

Educators in the present study were picking subjects taught in primary schools and teaching them to adults. This may have served as a means of creating a variety of learning activities and make adults feel that they were also learning. This thinking is in line with what Johnsen (2001) says about the need for a flexible educational system. However, as mentioned earlier, this might also be mistaken by adults as learning childish things which could also be a reason for some adult learners to drop out.

Adult educators identified coping strategies that were being applied in order for learners to keep participating in learning programmes. Both Paul (urban) and Tom (rural) identified giving advice to adult learners as a strategy that was being used to increase learners' participation. They also reported that they encouraged learners to have time tables for each activity. This tends to indicate that the

educators were responsible adult educators who were determined to make the learners achieve their goals. As discussed in Chapter 2, Rice (1992) observed that educators of learners who have problems should be honest, sincere, caring, socially responsible and academically good.

Further findings also indicate that interesting social activities at the learning centres were organised to keep adults attracted to the learning centres. As discussed in Chapter 2, Calder (1993) suggests that a man or a woman who learns may be doing so for some social reason. This thinking also agrees with the observation of Tait (2000) when he talks of the use of meaningful engagement with individual learners (see Chapter 2). Therefore the idea of organising interesting social activities at learning centres could have been among the reasons why some of the learners were still participating despite the problems they mentioned.

It is not surprising that Case Peter mentioned few coping strategies, as he had actually dropped out from the programme. He however insisted that when his problems reduced, he would immediately rejoin the learning programme. His many problems could be shown by the many times he failed to show up for interviews but his desire to rejoin the programme could also be shown by the fact that, despite the many problems he had, he finally made it to come for interviews and insisted that he was very ready to take part in the study as an interviewee. The realization of adult learners' problems by an adult educator tended to indicate that they were being accepted in learning with their problems. This finding is in line with what Evans (cited in Rumble 2000:223) observed: that educators should understand their learners' context. This could increase learners' persistence in learning programmes as educators get to know different contexts in which their learners are and treat them individually. It was also reported that learners were being given material incentives to attract them to the learning centres. However,

this strategy is good as long as the incentives last. But when the learners stop getting them, then it may turn to be a cause for their drop out. This strategy was mentioned by the rural adult educator who had less training in the facilitation of adult learners and the fact that the trained educator did not mention it, tends to show that he was aware of its consequences.

Summing up the discussion of results in the light of previous studies topic, it should be kept in mind that only few of the studies discussed above were conducted in African context and comparison of results may therefore need careful interpretation of similarities and differences.

5.2 Discussion of findings in relation to theoretical perspectives

5.2.1 The reference group perspective

Reference group theory suggests that an individual's perception of what he/she thinks others think about him/her, affects in some manner the way that individual perceives or feels about himself or her self. This theory observes the significant role of others in defining the life of group members. The findings of this study can be reflected upon from this theory.

As the presentation of results in Chapter 4 indicated, adult learners were motivated to participate in learning programmes partially because they were influenced by other people in their groups. For example; Case Henry said he joined the learning programme to acquire education because his wife was also educated. This may indicate that he had an influence from his wife. Case Mary said she joined the program because she was denied education in her youth, this may indicate that she had other groups of educated women in the village that she wanted to be like. Likewise, Case Christine reported that she joined the learning programme because

she wanted to join the literate society (a society that reads and writes with understanding).

Kroger (1989) seems to have the same idea with the proponents of reference group theory when he said that people tend to define themselves and others in comparison terms, to judge themselves according to some standards or to see themselves as less better or less privileged than others. This might be a reason why many learners in the present study had dropped out.

The reference group theory also suggests that an individual's perception of what he or she thinks that other people think about him/her, affects in some way how that individual perceive himself or herself. This may explain why male learners at the centres felt ashamed learning from a group of female adult learners.

Despite the affirmative action taken by the government of Uganda to improve on women's education, the majority of men and even some women themselves still attach most of the domestic work to women, and as a result men in their groups may be influenced by others to stop their wives from participating. This can be used to explain what Case Christine reported that some husbands were stopping their wives from participating in learning programmes.

5.2.2 The Maslow's hierarchy of needs perspective

This theory explains the role played by needs in determining human behaviour and how in the course of development, every individual has basic needs, and as soon as one need is satisfied, another one arises (Maslow, 1954).

According to the hierarchy of needs theory, needs are understood as either being of a lower level (deficiency needs) or higher level (growth needs). The lower level needs must be satisfied before the higher level ones can begin to operate.

Understanding on how these needs operate, might help in understanding adults' motivation to participate in learning programmes and in the long run provide strategies for their persistence in the programmes. In such cases, the needs might work as motivating factors for adult learners' participation in learning programmes. Maslow arranged the needs in levels as follows: Physiological needs, Safety needs, Social needs, Esteem needs and Self actualization.

Findings of the present study indicate that the dominant motivating factor of all adults to participation in learning programmes was "to be literate" (to be able to read and write with understanding) in order to be able to function in their societies. This tends to indicate that reading and writing was a pressing need for the adult learners which is in line with what Wlodkowski (1985) says; that pressing needs create a need for them to participate in learning despite the competing roles they have. Case Peter was also motivated to participate because he simply wanted to acquire knowledge.

In spite of being people of low income, some of them living in the rural area and others in the high density areas of the town, all the five adult learners still had a desire to continue participating in the learning programmes. All the learners had realised that education might be an important means to improve their lives in their communities and as such satisfy needs on several of the described levels of needs (Maslow, 1954), for instance social and safety needs as well as esteem needs.

5.2.3 Barriers to participation perspective

Cross (1981) discussed the reasons why adults participate, and more importantly, why adults do not participate. She defined three barriers to participation in learning programmes as situational, institutional and dispositional.

Findings of the present study reveal that most of the barriers that learners were facing were of an institutional character. For example; Case Jane reported that she

feared doing examinations, Case Christine identified the time table of the learning centre as having affected many adults since the time for learning was not in harmony with their free time, Case Peter revealed that putting different categories of learners in the same class had also an impact on their participation, Case Mary reported lack of seats at the learning centre and Case Henry said that their educator was treating them as young children. This means that institutions could do something to increase learners' participation.

However, findings also revealed dispositional and situational barriers. For example all the five learners reported being laughed at, Case Christine reported that she was worried of the distance from the learning centre to her new home and Case Mary reported sickness as a barrier to their participation.

5.3 Conclusion

The issues concerning participation of adult learners in learning programmes in Uganda have been cited and discussed based on experience, relevant literature in the field and the findings of the present study.

As noted in the findings of the present study, adult learners participating in formal adult education programmes engage themselves in learning activities that equip them with skills which can help them perform well in their communities, although some differences are observed. Unfortunately, the continued barriers to their participation were reported and they appeared to stem largely from the workload and responsibilities they had apart from learning, the management of the learning centres and their interactions with other persons within their communities.

Although there is widespread talk about adult education and development in Uganda, the findings tend to show that some members of the local communities

still regard participation as a waste of time. Heavy work lies ahead to sensitise these communities about the importance of educating the adult population in relation to development.

There is an indication that the educators knew what to do but practically it was not possible because of other factors. The drop out rate was still high in their learning centres. However, commendable efforts were made by both learners and their educators to improve on learners' participation in learning programmes.

Strategies to increase learners' participation should be improved on as well as equipping the educators with necessary skills and materials to support the learners as they pursue their education.

5.4 Recommendations

Recommendations drawn from the discussions presented above mainly concern adult learners, adult educators and to some extent the policy makers.

From the study findings, it is evident that the plight of adult learners is not well focused on. Learners are often confronted with stress reactions from their workplaces or homes up to the learning centres, something which has a negative impact on the learners' persistence in participating in learning programmes.

The following recommendations should be put into consideration:

- There is a need for providing enough professional adult educators who will be able to handle different learning activities offered at learning centres.
- Provision of adequate facilities at learning centres is highly needed to create a good and attracting learning environment for learners.

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- Considerations of locations of learning centres have to be put into account in order to avoid situations where adult learners are laughed at even when they are at the learning centres. Adult learners need an independent learning centre where they are sure that everybody around them is a learner or a facilitator. In this study there were some adults who reported being laughed at by people at learning centres and even those passing by.
 - There may also be a need for not generalising adult learners by putting them in the same class. Their differences like age and past educational experience should be studied first and where possible, classes should be organised according to different levels. Choice of learning activities should be allowed so that participants attend the activities they like and are not counted absent when they do not attend an activity that they are not interested in.
 - There is need for community sensitisation about the benefits of adult' participation in learning programmes. They may help change peoples' negative attitudes to grown up people participating in learning programmes.
 - A need to put teaching into different sessions should also be considered so that on a particular day, teaching is in the morning hours, and on another day, or the same day, teaching is in the evening. This can help learners who may be busy in the morning but have time in the middle of the day or in the evening.
 - These recommendations do not show all the possible ways that can help increase adult learners' participation in learning programmes. They only show some possible ways which should be adopted. Therefore, further research with many cases and in many different districts of Uganda would be worthwhile in order to get a wider picture of what influences adults' participation and how best adults can be helped to persist in learning programmes.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview guide for adult learners

Introduction

Thank you very much for having accepted to participate in this exercise. I'm a student at Oslo University and I'm studying the problems that adult learners go through and the strategies being used to make them effectively participate. I'm therefore going to ask you a few questions in our conversation and I would like to assure you that all the information you share with me will be treated with confidentiality and only used for educational purpose. Feel free to ask me questions where you do not understand. I hope you do not mind if I use a tape recorder since I need to go back and listen to our conversation.

Background

1. Age range: Below 20 years
 20 -30 years
 31 -40 years
 Above 40 years
2. Gender: Female.....
 Male.....
3. What is your educational background?
4. Apart from learning what else do you do?
5. How big is your family?

Learning programmes for adults

6. What learning kind of learning programmes are you engaged in?
7. How can you describe the learning programmes for adult learners in this centre?

Reasons for learning

8. (a) How far is your home from this learning centre?
(b) What effect do you think this distance has on your learning?
9. Why did you decide to come to school at an older age?
10. How do you think this course is going to benefit you?

Barriers faced

11. How can you describe learning as an adult person?
12. What is your view towards sitting examinations?
13. How relevant is the curriculum content to you?
14. What is the opinion of your village mates towards your being in school at this age?
15. What comment can you give on learner-educator interaction in this Learning centre?
16. What is your opinion on the age of your educator?
17. What is your comment on the physical conditions of the learning centre?
18. Give your comment on the duration of the course.
19. Give your experiences of being an adult learner.

Coping strategies

20. How are you able to combine learning and your daily work?
21. Apart from learning, what other help do you get from your educators?

-
22. What do you think your educators can do to make your learning effective?
 23. Is there anything else you want to tell me concerning this area?

Thank you.

Appendix 2

Interview guide for Adult Educators

Introduction

Thank you very much for having accepted to participate in this exercise. I'm a student at Oslo University and I'm studying the problems that adult learners go through and the strategies being used to make them effectively participate in learning programmes. I'm therefore going to ask you a few questions in our conversation and I would like to assure you that all the information you share with me will be treated with confidentiality and only used for educational purpose. Feel free to ask me questions where you do not understand. I hope you do not mind if I use a tape recorder since I need to go back and listen to our conversation.

Background

1. Age range: Below 20 years
 20 -30 years
 31 -40 years
 Above 40 years
2. Gender: Female
 Male
3. What is your educational background in relation to adult education?

Learning programmes available

4. What kind of learning programmes do you offer at this learning centre?
5. How can you describe the relevancy of your learning programmes to the needs of adult learners?

Reasons for coming to learn

- 6 In your opinion, what do you think encourages adults to come to your learning centre?
7. How are adult learners involved in designing the curriculum content?

Barriers to participation

8. From your experience, what is your view on teaching adults?
9. What is your comment on the physical conditions of your learning centre?
10. Can you describe the rules and regulations you have in this learning centre?

Coping strategies

11. What methods do you use in the teaching process at this learning centre?
12. What is your comment on educator- learner interaction?
13. Can you describe how you assess your adult learners?
14. What would you want improved in your learning centre for the benefit of adult learners?
15. Is there anything you would like to share with me?
16. Is there anything else you want to tell me concerning this area?

Thank you,

Appendix 3. Introduction letter.



**UNIVERSITY
OF OSLO**

Department of Special Needs Education

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that **NIWAGABA, Egedius**, date of birth 28.02.1965, is a full-time student pursuing a course of study at the Department of Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo, Norway, leading to the degree of Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education (M. Phil. SNE).

This is a continuous two-year programme run on the "sandwich" principle, which involves periods of study and field work/research in both Norway and the home country. The student has concluded the initial 11-month period in Norway and will be returning to the home country in July 2006 to continue full-time studies/research until 1 January 2007 when s/he returns to Norway for the final part of the degree. The period of study will be completed at the end of May 2007.

The main responsibility for supervising the research, developmental work and thesis remains with the Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Norway. However, we would kindly request that the relevant authorities give the student the access required to the schools and educational establishments necessary in order to undertake field work and research. We would also be most grateful for any assistance that is afforded to the student which enables her/him to carry out this work, particularly the use of facilities such as access to telephone, fax, e-mail, computer services and libraries at the various educational establishments.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Berit Helene Johnsen (dr.scient.)
Academic Head of International Master's Programme
Department of Special Needs Education

Department of Special Needs Education
Faculty of Education
University of Oslo, Norway

Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet
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Appendix 4

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE COORDINATORS OF LEARNING CENTRES

C/O Kyambogo University
P.O.Box 1, Kyambogo.

1st August, 2006

The Coordinator,
..... Learning Centre/ Programme

Dear Sir\ Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct Research in your learning centre/ Programme

I humbly put forward my request to your office to allow me carry out research in your learning centre.

I'm a student undertaking a Masters degree in Special Needs Education in University of Oslo, Norway and my research topic is participation of adult learners.

I will need to interview two of your adult learners and one of their educators. Any information got from your learning centre will only be used for academic purpose and treated with high confidentiality.

Thank in advance.

Yours truly,

Egidius NIWAGABA

Student M.Phil.SNE,

University of Oslo, Norway

Appendix 5

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE ADULT LEARNERS

C/O Kyambogo University
P.O.Box 1, Kyambogo.

1st August, 2006

Dear Learner

.....

Re: Permission to conduct Research in your learning centre/ Programme

I'm a student at the University of Oslo and I'm studying the problems that adult learners go through and the strategies being used to make them effectively participate in learning programmes. I therefore humbly request you to participate in this study by sharing with me the views you have on your participation in this program. Whatever we discuss will be treated with confidentiality and only be used for educational purpose.

Thank in advance.

Yours truly,

Egidius NIWAGABA

Student M.Phil.SNE,

University of Oslo, Norway

Appendix 6

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO ADULT EDUCATORS

C/O Kyambogo University

P.O.Box 1, Kyambogo.

1st August, 2006

Mr. /Ms.

.....

Re: Request to participate in Research

I'm a student at the University of Oslo and I'm studying the problems that adult learners go through and the strategies being used to make them effectively participate in learning programmes.

I therefore humbly request you to participate in this study by sharing with me the information you have on this topic.

My assurance is that whatever we shall discuss, will be treated with confidentiality and only be used for educational purpose.

Thank you in advance,

Egidius NIWAGABA

Student M.Phil.SNE,

University of Oslo, Norway

